

Environmental Management Plan

SOUTHERN COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Tour Guides Association of Toledo
Punta Gorda Town
August 2015

Table of Contents

PROJECT DESCRIPTION 3

PROJECT OBJECTIVES..... 4

PROJECT ACTIVITIES 5

EXPECTED RESULTS..... 5

EXPECTED IMPACTS..... 5

MITIGATION MEASURES 7

MONITORING PROGRAM..... 7

LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY 8

COST ESTIMATES AND SOURCES OF FUNDS..... 8

ADDITIONAL INFO 9

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Tour Guide Association of Toledo has a project that creates a coastal water taxi service involving four villages of Punta Negra, Barranco, and Monkey River, and the town of Punta Gorda.

Punta Gorda town, locally known as PG is located on the west coast of the Caribbean Sea in Southern Belize. Punta Gorda Town has a population of about 6,000 inhabitants. PG is the perfect base from which to explore the rest of southern Belize. There's a diverse culture and many natural attractions including fishing, kayaking, river touring, and snorkeling. PG also has established routes to and from PG via boat, bus, planes etc. However, most people use Punta Gorda as a transit point due to lack of infrastructure and things to do.

Punta Negra is a coastal community 23 miles northeast of Punta Gorda Town which consists of 9 households with 20 residents. The village has a school with bathroom facilities and a timber pier. The Village Council comprises of 7 members. TTGA is currently working along with Ms. Paula Jacobs who serves as the chairlady for the past four years. This village is known for having some of the last stretches of untouched beaches in the country of Belize. One can enjoy clear waters, gorgeous sand and acres of untouched wilderness.

Barranco is a Garifuna village in the southernmost part of Belize. It is nestled in the Bay of Honduras, with three rivers in proximity, the Moho, Temash and Sarstoon; it is 15 feet above sea level with a population of 150 people, inclusive of men, women and children. Barranco is predominantly a Garifuna speaking community, but is also home to three Q'echi families. The population make up is mainly middle aged persons and youths. It takes approximately one hour and half (private vehicle) by road, and 20 minutes by boat when travelling from Punta Gorda to Barranco. The village has electricity, cell phone service, two shops, one health center, a bar, a police station, a park, a school, and two churches. Barranco offers possibilities such as fishing, river tours, cultural appeal and bird watching.

Monkey River Village is the northernmost village in the Toledo District. This small village of 200 people sits on the southern bank of the mouth of the Monkey River. The entire village has one community center, one school, one church, two shops, two hotels, and two restaurants and bars. A small boardwalk borders the lagoon at the back where fishermen dock their boats. Wide sandy beaches stretch out along the mouth of the river and the east side of the village. Eco-tours take people up the Monkey River, on Jungle walks and into the bays to watch manatees, birds, monkeys and other wildlife.

The Toledo Tour Guide Association is a legally registered body established in March of 1995. The purpose of the association is to work directly with tour guides from the Toledo District in providing services such as applying or renewal of license, grant recommendations, and lobby for

trainings among others activities focusing on capacity building. The TTGA was the recipient for a grant from Friends of World Heritage Funds in 2007 and COMPACT Global Environment Facility Small Grant in 2007. The LayunrahounBarangu Project in Barranco, will create a fully integrated, comprehensive, touristic, experience based on Andy Palacio and the cultural life of Barranco. The LayunrahounBarangu Group will collaborate with the Toledo Tour Guide Association (TTGA) in hosting local and foreign tourists brought to the village.

This project seeks to develop these communities by bringing awareness to the many attractions offered in each location. By taking a boat full of visitors to anyone of the locations there will be economic opportunities to the communities. The project will address three main problems with the four communities; these problems include lack of job opportunities, transportation set back, and the lack of human capacity. Punta Negra has 15 miles of beautiful sandy beach, very good cooks, a relaxing atmosphere and a vibrant fishing community. However, Punta Negra is very remote with no road access and it is very costly to charter a boat or to conduct your own private run. This project will address the transportation needs once a week and the journey will take about 45 minutes, allowing visitors and locals a more economical means of transportation. Monkey River has road access and tourism traffic from Placencia. This project will then allow tourists to access Monkey River directly through Punta Gorda once a week. However the water run will only go to Monkey River if they have passengers who request it as this would be considered as a waste of fuel and money. TTGA's main objective is to build human capacity within the communities involved. Due to distance and lack of infrastructure it is difficult for members of these communities to develop the necessary capacity to provide a meaningful income to their families. For all communities this project will boost the amount of visitors to the area.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. To increase the number of visitors who overnight in Punta Gorda by offering more attractions and activities.
2. To re-establish and develop a marine transportation network with the coastal communities.
3. To link communities for better collaboration.
4. To generate income for the TTGA and those involved.
5. To provide more access to tourism related activities.
6. To make the TTGA more financially sustainable.
7. To improve the local Garifuna museum and include a tribute to local musical legend Andy Palacio.
8. To renovate a building for the purpose of making displaying arts and crafts for sale.
9. To conduct training sessions for villagers to be artisans, tour guides, and service providers.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

TTGA Activities

1. Expose as many natural and cultural resources in the communities involved.
 - a. Such as the beach in Punta Negra, the eco-tour in Monkey river, and the cultural tour in Barranco
2. Provide tour guide training sessions for interested members of the tour guides association.
3. Actively market the project so that the tour guide association can generate income transporting visitors to and from Punta Gorda.
4. Provide the opportunities for members that conduct the marine tours from overnight tourists that will be encouraged to spend some time in Punta Gorda.

Punta Negra Activities

1. A shed to be constructed for visitors and community use
2. The construction of picnic tables, sheds, and hammocks for locals and guest use.

Barranco Activities

1. To redesign and renovate the Garifuna museum to include:
 - a. Development of a policy to guide development and management/operation
 - b. A tribute to Andy Palacio.
 - c. Adequate restrooms
 - d. Reorganization and upgrading of the artifacts and pictures on display.
 - e. A self-guided tour.
2. Develop a policy for the acquisition of artifacts and management of the museum.
3. Hire a trained tour guide as a curator.
4. Actively market the museum and Barranco through the partnership with the tour guide association.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The expected results include:

- a) Increased and improved communication with three coastal communities, particularly Punta Negra and Barranco;
- b) Increased tourism in southern Toledo;
- c) increase in household incomes for those groups participating in the project; and
- d) increased economic activity in coastal communities in Toledo.

EXPECTED IMPACTS

The expected impacts of the project are:

- Those related to recreational use of coastal natural resources; and
- Those related to boating activities.

In regards to the recreational use of coastal resources, the potential negative coastal environmental impacts would result from:

- i. the presence of a high number of people on fragile ecosystems (in this case beaches),
- ii. pressure on limited local resources and increased invasion of natural areas,
- iii. loss of natural habitat,
- iv. Altered or distressed animal behaviour,
- v. Erosion,
- vi. introduction of non-indigenous species,
- vii. and illegal sub-aquatic fishing.

In general terms, land degradation and land-use change, as well as habitat loss and different impacts and effects on biodiversity result directly from the construction of tourist facilities and infrastructure through the clearing of wetlands and the extraction of building materials.

The potential negative environmental impacts of boating activities include:

- i. Release of Hydrocarbon and other substances, in the form of unburnt or incompletely burnt fuel, particulates and traces of oil, into the environment by the engines of recreational and commercial small crafts, particularly outboard engines. While it is estimated that this represents only a small share (2%) of overall hydrocarbon releases from land-based activities, it needs to be taken into consideration and adequately addressed.
- ii. Oil and bilge water discharge. Again this is a very small percentage but still needs to be addressed.
- iii. Noise pollution, particularly for aquatic animals. In accordance with standards, the authorized level of noise emitted by new engines has been limited since 2006. However, when operated at speed close to the shore, engine noise is perceived as a nuisance in sensitive areas such as beaches or natural protected areas.
- iv. Solid waste discharge into the sea. While this is a problem for larger vessels (merchant vessels, cruise ships, fishing vessels etc.), it is still a concern from small commercial and recreational vessels.
- v. Antifouling paints: they are used to prevent marine organisms developing on the surface of the hull. The broad spectrum biocide agents that they contain are normally toxic for the environment, but their use is regulated.
- vi. Physical damage to the environment: anchors and physical contact with the seabed can be harmful in ecologically sensitive areas. Public authorities are responsible for providing the necessary infrastructure (such as buoys) and guiding visitors, they should also prevent anchoring in sensitive areas.

MITIGATION MEASURES

- Purchase and make proper use of four stroke outboard engines. The majority of four-stroke outboards feature sophisticated computer engine management systems and fuel injection for good performance across the power spectrum, low emissions, and high fuel economy. Very much like a car, the emissions from four stroke outboards are closely monitored and controlled.
- Ensuring that the boat crew and clients engage in proper procedure and best practices for boating operation and safety. Boat crew will be expected to follow the proper procedure of safe operation, anchoring and docking.
- Ensure that the bilge is discharged only in approved areas. It is expected that this will not be a major concern as the boat will be trailered at the end of every day. Discharges can then be done on land where it can be contained as opposed to discharging directly into the water.
- Because of environmental health and safety standards that need to be met, all modern outboard engines go through a rigorous test for noise control. As a result, any engine purchased will be within the acceptable range for noise control.
- Antifouling paints that meet the new environmental standards will be used on the hull of the boat. However, modern fiberglass techniques, such as gel coating, often preclude the need for antifouling treatments.
- Strategically placing appropriate garbage containers throughout the vessel will reduce the incidents of passengers and crew throwing solid waste over the side. Passengers will also be reminded at the start of each trip that garbage should not be thrown over the side of the vessel.
- Because of the impact that large numbers of people are known to have on a particular environment through visitation, the numbers of persons visiting Punta Negra and Barranco at any one time will be closely monitored and managed. To date no official numbers have been developed for the recreational sector so the precautionary principle will be applied when deciding how many persons can visit any of the two sites simultaneously.

MONITORING PROGRAM

The monitoring programme will be anchored by (i) the daily travel and boat logs for the water taxi, (ii) the visitation logs for the museum and (iii) the visitation rate for the area in Punta Negra. Vessel crew will complete daily logs for boat and passenger movement. Visitation to the museum in Barranco will be monitored through a visitors' logbook and the staff at the kitchen will be asked to monitor the visitation to the beach area in Punta Negra. This information will be reviewed monthly by the committee that will be established to manage the project. Corrective action will be taken where necessary at every step in the process.

LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Association of Tour Guides of Toledo is the organization that is providing the lead and is responsible for implementation and oversight of activities in the other two communities. The organization/group in each community is responsible for activities in that particular community. They are then responsible to the Association of Tour Guides, who in turn reports to BEST.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

In May of 2013 Dr. Roy Young, the consultant hired by BEST to do the baseline assessment and Project Orientation held a two day workshop in Punta Gorda for residents in Punta Gorda, San Miguel, Monkey River and Punta Negra. In September of 2013 BEST staff held a similar meeting in the community of Barranco. At all the meetings participants were encouraged to come up with ideas for projects that would be beneficial for the environment and which would generate income. During the development of the sub-project proposals groups met and discussed their individual concepts. The Technical Officer and proposal writing consultant worked with each groups to ensure that there was inclusion and consensus. Punta Gorda presented a proposal for the development of a water taxi service between coastal communities as a way of encouraging tourism in the Toledo district. In their proposal Punta Negra requested assistance in developing a recreational area on a section of beach. After much consultation, the Barranco proposal requested assistance in developing cultural tourism in the village, thereby increasing visitation and generating additional income for residents. The Technical Officer then did the relevant due diligence to ensure that the concepts were technically sound and financially feasible.

In 2014 the Project Steering Committee instructed that all projects of a similar nature in the same region should be amalgamated into one. Because the three projects were all tourism-based, the three communities were encouraged to amalgamate. Over a series of several meetings held in Punta Gorda a single proposal was developed and submitted on behalf of the three groups. Again the emphasis was on inclusion and consensus. The Association of Tour Guides of Toledo was asked to be the lead organization and be responsible for the proper implementation of the project as they had experience in implementing grant funded project. There is no special protocol that is used for meetings and consultation with these groups, but requires that members be notified at least five days in advance of any meeting.

COST ESTIMATES AND SOURCES OF FUNDS

The cost of putting in place the mitigation measures is already built into the budget so there is no need for additional budgeting for these activities.

Approved Budget

		Beneficiary Contribution
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Line Item	JSDF		Total
Administration /Operating Expenses			
Fuel	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00
Boat captain		\$26,000.00	\$26,000.00
Website, Social Media, TV, Newspaper,	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
28' Skiff - Carry 18pax	\$ 30,000.00		\$ 30,000.00
Twin 100 HP 4 Stroke Engine	\$ 60,000.00		\$ 60,000.00
Boat Accessories	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00
Trailer	\$ 20,000.00		\$ 20,000.00
Safety Equipment	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 7,000.00
Training – boat handling		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Shed/communications	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00
Renovation of museum	\$41,252.00		
Beach Clean up	\$ 4,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Contingency	\$15,000.00		\$15,000.00
TOTAL:	\$ 221,252.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 256,252.00

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All activities associated with this project will fall within the following legislative frameworks:

Belize Port Authority Act – Chapter 233 and 233S

Belize Tourism Board Act - Chapter 275 and 275S

National Institute Of Culture and History Act - Chapter 331 and 331S